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23 Illinois Administrative Code 50: Redefining The Formal School Site Observation In Principal Evaluation (A Policy Advocacy Document)

Noah Riley

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23 ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 50: REDEFINING THE FORMAL SCHOOL
SITE OBSERVATION IN PRINCIPAL EVALUATION
(A POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT)

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
In the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

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National Louis University
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Document Origination Statement for Digital Commons @ NLU

This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership Ed.D. is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006). For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

EXAMINING THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS TO IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT FROM CENTRAL OFFICE:
A PROGRAM EVALUATION

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
PRINCIPALS AND THEIR SUPERVISOR:
A CHANGE INITIATIVE

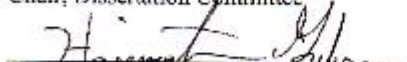
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A POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

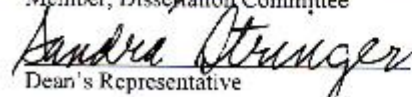
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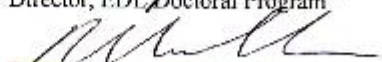
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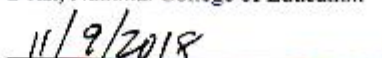

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ABSTRACT

This document explores how the establishment of a Principal Evaluation Steering Committee (PESC) to implement and monitor U.S. District X's Illinois Principal Evaluation Plan (IPEP) may ensure the effectiveness of its principals as *capacity builders* who facilitate *meaningful* and *productive systems change*. The PESC intervention helps ensure principals and their staff is engaging in purposeful *reflective practice* and *collegial inquiry* activities and exercises designed to increase their cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities (Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, & Asghar, 2013). This document outlines the positive and effective impacts in the contexts of educational, economic, social, political and, moral and ethical disciplinary areas; and advocates that the establishment of a PESC becomes policy in the district. By igniting, through policy, the potential principals can bring to the table individually and collectively through *reflective practice* and *collegial inquiry*—rather than using evaluation rating as a means of weeding out ineffective leadership provides a hopeful alternative to a more sanctions-oriented approach to leadership and school improvement (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Superville, 2015).

PREFACE: LESSONS LEARNED

This Policy Advocacy document is the culminating section of a three-part document that began with an examination of the perceptions of principals in U.S. District X of their professional development opportunities and support from central office; as the focus of my Program Evaluation document. In my Change Plan Initiative document, I explored ways to create conditions for collaborative relationships between principals and their supervisor. This policy document combines information from each of the two previous documents in establishing a basis for advocating a policy that may ensure the successful implementation and effectiveness of the proposed Change Plan Initiative presented in document two.

In advocating for policy change, one lesson to be learned is that in addition to the realization of the importance of proposed collaborative leadership between principals and their supervisor within the district there must also be the existence of a structure and process for ensuring effective functionality. This structure and process helps the district absorb any disturbances (challenges) and to be able to draw out (plan for) new patterns of improvement (Fullan, 2011).

Another leadership lesson that I gained through the analysis of data process relates to the variableness of principal perceptions and the contrast of the perceptions of their supervisor. Even within a small group of respondents, perceptions can vary significantly, depending upon the interpretation of each respondent. In addition, the collective perceptions of principals can differ tremendously from those of their supervisor depending on the level of effective articulation of a vision and perspective of a plan of action. If a supervisor effectively articulates the district shared vision, coupled with a

structure for monitoring and evaluation of its implementation, the gap between principal perceptions and those of their supervisor should narrow in the process; helping to create conditions for effective collaboration. Furthermore, if the principal supervisor operates in a partner relationship with principals on an ongoing basis, the perception of shared accountability and meaningful central office support is perpetuated and the capacity of principals to influence instruction and learning is enhanced tremendously. These combined leadership lessons are essential to the success of creating a successful and sustainable school culture and learning environment; and helps set the stage for creating opportunities for meaningful and productive systems change.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

Introduction

Principals, as instructional leaders, need specific support and job-embedded professional development that is often not realized through the principal evaluation process often in place in the school districts they serve (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kelley & Peterson, 2002). As a veteran principal at both the middle and high school levels, I have spent time reflecting on the support and professional development school principals receive from the district central office. I became aware of the need for a policy on principal evaluation through the review of literature on the topic. Through the literature review, I discovered what highly successful school districts do to support and develop their principals' *capacity* to facilitate *meaningful* and *productive systems change*.

In 2010, the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (P.A. 96-861) established an evaluation process, the Illinois Principal Evaluation Plan (IPEP) that focuses on facilitating *meaningful* and *productive* systems change (Illinois State Board of Education). For this policy advocacy project, *meaningful systems change* is described as research-based and reflecting the best thinking of the current school community. *Productive systems change* is described as resulting in improved instruction and student growth (IPEP).

The Performance Evaluation Reform Act of 2010 was passed in Illinois to provide direction for developing performance evaluation systems for not only principals but also teachers as well. These performance evaluation systems were required to be valid and reliable, and contribute to the development of staff and improved student achievement outcomes. This policy document, however, focuses only on principals.

The Illinois Principal Evaluation Plan (IPEP) requires an assessment of both the principal's professional *practice* and students' growth. It is to be an assessment, in other words, of both the actions of principals and the results achieved. Data gathered from surveys for both my program evaluation and change plan initiative indicated two significant observations. One observation was that supervision and evaluation of school principals are generally conducted by the superintendent. The second observation was that evaluations seldom, if at all, are evaluated for evidence of improvement in student achievement (Riley, 2016; Riley, 2017).

Even though the IPEP is grounded in the purposes of accountability, improving system performance, and in professional learning (Illinois State Board of Education), the language and guidelines as stated fail to align with the very foundational research that it is intended to reflect. Additionally, if the language was more explicitly stated and echoed through the lenses of principals rather than from an evaluator's (principal supervisor) perspective, the desired impact through the use of the IPEP could have been more fully realized.

The late Grant Wiggins, a former consultant, in reflecting on reform initiatives regarding formative assessment and useful feedback, often cited the work of John Hattie (2008) and others (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). In their work, they describe formative assessments in education as not merely preceding summative assessments, but that the performer—in this case, the principal, has opportunities, if results are less than optimal, to reshape the performance to better achieve the goal. They further posit that adjusting performance depends on not only receiving feedback but also having opportunities to use it.

Most principal supervisors/evaluators and principals agree that the primary focus of the principal evaluation process should be to determine how effective the principal is as a capacity builder who facilitates meaningful and productive systems change. In the absence of an examination of the formal school site observations' role in the process however, such change is not realized. The IPEP process's potential for facilitating meaningful and productive systems change, as a result, is greatly reduced. Further, while the IPEP requires assessment of both the principal's professional *practice* and students' growth, there is no in-depth attention to how the formal school site observations support the facilitation of meaningful and productive systems change. These intended consequences of the IPEP process; in the absence of an examination of the formal school site observations' role in the process dramatically reduces its potential for facilitating meaningful and productive systems change. It is my intent, through this policy document, to address this issue.

Policy Issue Awareness in Retrospect

The focus of my change plan initiative (Riley, 2017) was to examine how to improve leadership competency and capacity development through a collaborative partnership built on trust and mutual respect between principals and their supervisors/evaluators (Superville, 2015). Specifically, I examined how school districts can *intentionally* incorporate ongoing job-embedded professional development that promotes collaboration and reflective practice between supervisors/evaluators of school principal and principals. The literature review validated and supported this concept (Superville, 2015; Turnbull, Anderson, Riley, MacFarlane, & Aladjem, 2016; Warren & Kelsen, 2013). The literature review (Riley, 2017) indicated that how school leaders use

their time is the single most significant determinant of whether their schools will succeed. It further noted that a collaborative orientation creates opportunities for principal supervisors/evaluators to train principals in executing quality instruction and school culture. Also, it stated that principal supervisors/evaluators must intentionally create opportunities to coach principals continuously, utilizing face-to-face activities on quality instruction and learning in real time (Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser, 2012).

As I perused the IPEP process as structured, I realized that the *formal school site observations* are opportunities for supervisors to *intentionally* incorporate ongoing job-embedded professional development that promotes collaboration and reflective practice. I realized that *school site observations*, whether formal or informal, are excellent opportunities for supervisors/evaluators to build and use tools to monitor progress on what matters most—executing quality instruction and learning (Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser, 2012). One of the recommendations from my program evaluation (Riley, 2016) was that *reprioritized practices* of supervisors/evaluators include not only accompanying and observation of principals during classroom visits and post-observation conferences but also real-time conversations together. The benefits are twofold. First, real-time conversations are opportunities to discuss evidence of how principals have delivered focused feedback effectively to teachers. Secondly, these conversations are opportunities to discuss how principals are developing their skills in facilitating conversations productively with teachers in a way that teachers receive the feedback positively. Doing so allows teachers to reflect on classroom successes, challenges and ideas to improve instructional practices. These evidence-based strategies align with new evaluation instruments (e.g., IPEP) and systems (Halverson & Clifford, 2006).

Critical Issues

In examining 23 Illinois Administration Code 50, a policy that governs principal evaluation, I realized that as stated, the guidelines regarding *feedback from the formal observations*, subsection (c) (1) (C) and informal observations, subsection (c) (2), imposes restrictions and limitations with respect to creating opportunities for meaningful and productive systems change—the purpose of the IPEP process (Illinois State Board of Education). The guidelines in subsection (c) (1) (C) are stated explicitly as: “Feedback from the formal observations shall be provided in writing (electronic or paper) to the principal or assistant principal no later than 10 principal work days after the day on which the observation occurred” (p. 35). Restrictions are imposed not by any stated words, however, but by those excluded. As indicated, the language does not include guidelines for utilizing face-to-face opportunities on quality instruction and culture *in real time* (Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser, 2012; Wiggins, 2012). This strategy was recommended in my change plan initiative (Riley, 2017).

Research indicates that formative assessment, consisting of lots of feedback and opportunities to use that feedback, enhances performance and achievement (Bransford et al., 2000; Hattie, 2008; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). In education, *formative* assessment not only precedes summative assessment, but also presents opportunities for the performer—in this case, the principal to reshape the performance to better achieve the goal if results are less than optimal. Adjusting performance depends on receiving feedback and personal reflection, and having opportunities to use the feedback.

Helpful feedback is goal-referenced; tangible and transparent; actionable; user-friendly (specific and personalized); timely; ongoing; and consistent. Feedback, also, does not need to come only from the evaluator (Wiggins, 2012). It is this fact, coupled with the essential element of timely that justifies re-examination and inclusion of additional guidelines that are less restrictive. Researchers (Bransford et al., 2000; Hattie, 2008; Marzano et al., 2001) generally agree that timely feedback is more useful.

The fact that the guidelines allow for written feedback to be provided “10 principal work days after the day on which the observation occurred” (p. 35) is problematic. Although not explicitly stated, it could be implied that timely (immediately within reason) feedback to the principal during the time of school site observations (formal or informal) is neither suggested nor recommended or required. As stated above, the absence of this language restricts the opportunity for vital feedback to be utilized face-to-face *in real time* (Bambrick-Santoyo & Peiser, 2012; Wiggins, 2012). It restricts principals from getting the timeliest feedback and opportunities to use it while the attempt and effects are still fresh in their minds. This critical issue makes this a policy problem in need of a response.

Another critical issue that makes this a policy problem in need of a response is the language in subsection (c) (2), (p.35) that reads

There is no limit on the number of informal observations that a qualified evaluator may conduct, provided that he or she deems the informal evaluations necessary to fully assess the performance of the principal or assistant principal being evaluated. Evidence gathered during informal observations may be considered in

determining the performance evaluation rating, provided it is documented in writing.

The stipulation that informal observations, which would include school site visitations, can only be conducted if the qualified evaluator deems the informal evaluations necessary to fully assess the performance of the principal or assistant principal being evaluated, is problematic within itself. Justification is in direct opposition to what the research says about the importance of executive-level district office administrators engaging in new relationships with principals, and providing job-embedded professional development support in building principals' capacity as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011). The literature review from my change plan initiative (Riley, 2017) indicated that high-achieving districts change their day-to-day work to provide support for principals' development as instructional leaders. The literature review further emphasized the impact of principals and their supervisor working alongside each other in the form of a mentor-coach relationship, *focusing on joint work*. This mentor-coach relationship helps improve instructional leadership. Also, principals and their supervisors take joint ownership and responsibility for the results (Riley, 2017).

Recommended Solution: Extending the Language

As a result of analyzing findings from my program evaluation (Riley, 2016) and change initiative (Riley, 2017), supported by the research mentioned above, it was apparent that a recommendation for a policy change was needed. One recommendation emphasized the benefit of *immediate joint feedback* from both formal and informal school site observations. This collaborative conversation between the supervisor/evaluator and

the principal has potential for maximum benefit when it occurs in the timeliest manner. Timeliest manner is described as on the day site visitations occurs. The collaboration also provides opportunities to use the feedback while the occurrences of the school site observation and effects are still fresh in their minds. Following this protocol helps to facilitate meaningful and productive systems change more authentically.

Accordingly, I am recommending that the Illinois School Board of Education considers a language extension to its current guidelines for professional practice components for principals and assistant principals in the IPEP process. This recommended language extension is explicitly in regards to the principal and the assistant principal observations and feedback found in subsections (c) (1) (C) and (c) (2), (p.35) regarding school site visitations. The recommended and proposed language extension would read as follows: Subsection (c) (1) (C) (p. 35): Unofficial, but meaningful and useful *immediate joint feedback* between the principal and evaluator shall occur on the day of the school site visitation. Official feedback by the evaluator from the formal observations shall be provided in writing (electronic or paper) to the principal or assistant principal no later than ten principal work days after the day on which the observation occurred. For subsection (c) (1) (C), a “principal work day” is any day in which the principal or assistant principal is obligated to work contractually, regardless of whether students are present. Subsection (c) (2) (p.35): There is no limit on the number of informal observations that a qualified evaluator may conduct. Regular, ongoing informal observations with opportunities for *collaboration* and *reflective practice* are suggested strongly; especially when a qualified evaluator deems the informal observations necessary to fully assess the performance of the principal or the assistant principal being

evaluated. Evidence gathered during informal observations may be considered in determining the performance evaluation rating, provided it is documented in writing.

This language extension will remove restrictions concerning creating opportunities for meaningful and productive systems change—the purpose of the IPEP. Supported by the research from my change plan initiative related to creating conditions for collaborative relationships between principals and their supervisor (Riley, 2017), this would help strengthen a process for creating opportunities for facilitating meaningful and productive systems change. This strengthened process would help to ensure the performance evaluation system process is valid and reliable, and contributes to the development of staff and improved student achievement outcomes.

Policy Advocacy and Envisioned Effect

Through the change plan initiative literature review (Riley, 2017), I discovered there is a growing body of research (Bedard & Mombourquette, 2015; Honig, 2012; Kelley & Peterson, 2000; Manna, 2015; Marsh et al., 2005; Mendels, 2012) that has documented the critical roles that districts play in supporting and building principal capacity for instructional leadership development; making a strong case that executive-level district office administrators (e.g., superintendent, those close to the superintendent, deputy superintendent, etc.) could and should take the lead in helping principals learn to strengthen their instructional leadership (Riley, 2017). Though the focus of the IPEP is on facilitating *meaningful* and *productive systems change* rather than on just building leadership capacity or competence, building leadership skill and capacity is a necessary component of the principal evaluation process. I acknowledge that no one single plan or intervention is a panacea for facilitating *meaningful* and *productive* systems change.

However, the recommended policy advocacy of language extension contained in 23 Illinois Administrative Code 50, subsections (c) (1) (C) and (2) (C) helps to provide guidelines that are more explicit. These guidelines help to monitor and track the progress of principal growth and development effectively. The guidelines also ensure the district's effort to create ways to support and develop principals effectively and intentionally as *capacity builders* who facilitate *meaningful* and *productive systems change*.

The policy advocacy helps ensure principals and their staff is engaging in purposeful *reflective practice* and *collegial inquiry* activities and exercises designed to increase their cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities (Drago-Severson et al., 2013) in a consistent ongoing and timely manner in real time (Wiggins, 2012). *Reflective practice* is the ability to reflect on one's actions to engage in the process of continuous learning. It involves giving critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday activities, by examining practice reflectively. A *collegial inquiry* is a shared dialogue that purposefully consists in *reflecting* on one's assumptions, values, beliefs, commitments, and convictions with others as part of the learning process (Drago-Severson, 2009; Drago-Severson et al., 2013).

Research has shown that supporting adult growth while simultaneously holding high and rigorous expectations in schools link positively and directly with improved student performance scores and school experiences for all involved (Donaldson, 2008; Guskey, 2000; Keagan & Lahey, 2009; Murnane & Willet, 2010). Additionally, by igniting, through policy, the potential principals can bring to the table individually and collectively through *reflective practice* and *collegial inquiry*—rather than using evaluation rating as a means of weeding out ineffective leadership provides a hopeful

alternative to a more sanctions-oriented approach to leadership and school improvement (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Superville, 2015). Support for this policy advocacy ensures positive and effective impacts in the contexts of educational, economic, social, political and, moral and ethical disciplinary areas.

SECTION TWO: NEEDS ANALYSIS

The justification for advocating for a language extension outlined in 23 Illinois administrative Code 50, subsections (c) (1) (C) and (c) (2), is an outgrowth of identified needs from my program evaluation and change plan initiatives respectively (Riley, 2016, 2017). The recommendations and conclusions from the two documents led to the realization that recommending or strongly suggesting opportunities for more informal school site visitations and requiring more timely feedback to principals after school site observations has the potential to more effectively create opportunities for meaningful and productive systems change; and ultimately lead to improved instruction and increased student learning. Implications of relationships that impact the context, culture, conditions, and competencies for the realization of district-wide change (Wagner et al., 2006) are revealed through the analyzing of potential benefits.

Educational Analysis

As mentioned above, the Illinois Principal Evaluation Plan (IPEP) process is grounded in the purposes of accountability, improving system performance, and in professional learning (Illinois State Board of Education). The principal's performance practice is assessed through the evaluation process. This assessment of the principal's actions is intended to measure improvement in system performance. One significant means of measuring the principal's actions is through a formal (and informal) school site observation.

School site observations are excellent opportunities for the supervisor and principal to examine the principal's professional *practice* collaboratively to identify the principal's strengths and weaknesses along with areas for growth and development

regarding the principal's ability to facilitate meaningful and productive system change effectively. The literature review from my program evaluation and change plan initiatives (Riley, 2016, 2017) indicated the benefits of executive-level district office administrators engaging in new relationships with their school principals and providing job-embedded professional development support in building principals' capacity as instructional leaders. The review further indicated that such a collaborative partnership helps to create a trusting and mutually respectful relationship between principal evaluator (supervisor) and principal.

This mutually respectful relationship may contribute to the principal making gains in both conceptual understandings of professional performance practice and self-assessment skills, as they relate to being tangible and transparent (Wiggins, 2012) when completing the annually required self-assessment tool. With the approval of recommended proposed policy advocacy, the minimum requirement of two formal school site observations would remain; however, ongoing informal school site observations would be supported and suggested strongly without judgment or indication of having to deem the informal evaluations necessary to assess fully the performance of the principal or assistant principal being evaluated. This would remove any stigma around engaging in multiple informal school site observations.

The intent is to build a collaborative and trusting partner relationship between principal supervisor (evaluator) and principal in facilitating meaningful and productive system change; and more importantly, to provide ongoing job-embedded professional development and support to principals in the process. Recommendations from both the program evaluation and change plan initiatives (Riley, 2016, 2017) included ensuring

school leaders receive professional job-embedded development linked to performance feedback and student achievement; and be grounded in the use of data, open dialogue, courageous conversations, and interpersonal accountability. The literature review also stressed the importance of conducting school site visits (planned and announced) to provide individualized support to principals through district-level administrators, in this case, principal supervisors/evaluators' engagement in and modeling of the types of inquiry-based interactions highly effective districts expect to see in their schools (Riley, 2017). This new collaborative orientation creates opportunities for principal supervisors to train principals in executing quality instruction and culture. Also, it creates opportunities for supervisors to coach principals continuously, utilizing face-to-face activities on quality instruction and culture in real time. Further, this new collaborative orientation is an opportunity for principal supervisors to build and use tools to monitor progress on executing quality instruction and culture (Riley, 2017). The literature reviews (Riley, 2016, 2017) further indicated that the extent to which executive-level, district office administrators engage principals in these practices determines the sustainability level of engagement in ways essential to their learning. According to theories of learning, learners are more likely to participate deeply in activities they view as essential or whose importance is reinforced by their social or cultural contexts.

Implementing this language extension to *policy* helps ensure the provision of quality education for all students in a school/district “to the limits of their capacities” (Ill. Const. art. X, § 1). Principals who facilitate *meaningful* and *productive systems change*, furthermore, make important contributions to school culture and climate and have a significant impact on instruction and learning (Leithwood, Louis-Seashore, Anderson, &

Wahlstrom, 2004). They help their teachers improve by setting smart professional development agendas; selecting and then supporting accomplished teachers through distributed leadership, and working one-on-one coaching teachers who need individual guidance and support.

Social Analysis

Responding to the critical need of this proposed policy begins with an understanding that trust is not static (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005). It is established over time and consciously and consistently nurtured. The practical success of collaborative partner relationships through utilization of the process of school site visitations is not possible without establishing and maintaining a relationship that is characterized by trust and rapport. Several factors may cause principals to be cautiously reluctant about participating genuinely in a partnership they either don't view as important or view only as a means of their supervisor to uncover any doubts and failures principals may have. The phenomenon of unceasing public scrutiny (e.g., parent complaints, etc.) is one contributing factor. Another is the pressure to please a number of constituencies (e.g., the principal supervisor/evaluator). Still, another is the vulnerability that comes with positions of leadership. When the school district fails to provide time and resources to relieve principals from other responsibilities so that they can benefit from collaboration with their supervisors, these factors are further heightened (Bloom et al., 2005).

The collaborative partner relationship established through the school site visitation process may help remove cautious reluctance on the part of principals. Additionally, the perception that generally is viewed by principals that their evaluator

makes subjective judgments in assessing their performance may be eradicated as the trust and mutual respect levels increase over time. Increasing the trust and mutual respect levels has the potential of reversing principals' initial view of their supervisors/evaluators' perception of making subjective judgments to that of an objective view: the value of the school site visitations increases as trust and mutual respect increases (Riley, 2016, 2017). The potential ability of principals to develop and build confidence and capacity to influence instruction and learning is impacted, among other factors, by the level of trust at which they and their collaborative partners think through dilemmas of practice and make essential decisions collaboratively (Drago-Severson, 2009). Further, this form of cooperative exchange of ideas and expertise between principals and their principal supervisor/evaluator leads to a balance of both direction and capacity to make *informed* collective decisions leading to *meaningful* and *productive systems change* (Drago-Severson et al., 2013).

Economic Analysis

In addition to educational and social implications, there are also potential economic benefits to using school site observations as a means of creating collaborative partner relationships between principal supervisors/evaluators and principals. As discussed above in the educational analysis section, building collaborative partner relationships, in the process of operating, also creates job-embedded professional development opportunities for principals to increase their influence on instruction and learning. Those who supervise principals act as buffers and brokers. They not only ensure principals receive resources they need promptly but also contribute new ideas, understandings, and other resources that might advance the learning in the relationships;

to keep the relationships productive (Riley, 2017). The most benefit, from an economic perspective, perhaps, is the use of supervisors in a mentor-coach partner relationship. This high leverage strategy involving collaboration (Odden & Picus, 2014), has economic implications; especially for a school/district identified as having a low percent of adequacy; thus, needing greater state assistance in meeting its adequacy target (Odden, 2012).

Relatedly, this mentor-coach collaborative partnership impacts how school leaders use their time. The change plan initiative (Riley, 2017) indicated that how principals used their time is the single most significant determinant of whether their schools will succeed. The establishment of collaborative partner relationships through the school site visitations process has implications of yielding utilization of time more effectively and efficiently by both supervisors and principals, and has the potential to generate increased productive efficiency. This could contribute to the use of district funds more efficiently and equitably. More importantly, however, as indicated in the literature review (Riley, 2017), the amount of increased time devoted to useful instructional tasks correlates with improved instruction; and ultimately increased student achievement.

There are also implications of being an investment in the development of human capital. Investment of humans in education and learning experiences is a form of human capital development (Becker & Billings, 1993; Hartog, 2000). As effective facilitators of students' education, principals and their staff will be contributing to a more efficient and productive society (Hanushek, 1986) that ultimately leads to increased economic growth. This economic growth will be manifested in the form of a better prepared and trained

workforce (graduated students) with knowledge and skills to participate in a technical and ever-changing competitive global economic society (Heilbroner & Thurow, 1998).

According to statistics of the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), for example, ongoing investment in a principal alone can yield \$30K of increased student earnings for students of color at high poverty schools. Successful and continuous implementation of the recommended extension of language policy advocacy has the potential economic impact of increased student lifetime earnings.

Political Analysis

The increasing recognition in recent years, supported by research, that principal leadership is second in importance only to teaching among school-related influences on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004), has led to increased efforts, initiatives, policy and legislation from state and district officials, policymakers and others to promote excellence in education. Parents, especially, and other interested parties want their sons and daughters enrolled in schools where they can receive a quality education. States set standards, create accountability systems, generate data about student performance and enforce education codes. Despite these expectations and efforts, however, there is no definite assurance to the public that quality principals are leading our schools. Without the implementation and monitoring of an effective evaluation system, therefore, the certainty and evidence of how proficient and how successful principals are in continuously improving the quality of teaching and student learning in their schools remain an anomaly.

There are, however, a few political implications for the current IPEP process. The fact that the perceived view by principals regarding their evaluator being in a position to

make subjective judgments in assessing their performance challenges principals to see the value of participating in a collaborative relationship. The evaluation is generally viewed as a means of weeding out ineffective leadership rather than as a sanctions-oriented opportunity to monitor and grow their capacity to create meaningful and productive systems change. The common positional view of the relationship between the supervisor (evaluator) and the principal is that the principal is theoretically in a subordinate position. As previously mentioned in this document, Keagan and Lahey (2009) and others (Donaldson, 2008; Guskey, 2000; Murnane & Willett, 2010) postulates that supporting adult growth (i.e., through collaboration) while simultaneously holding high and rigorous expectations in schools have been positively and directly linked with improved student performance scores and school experiences for all involved. This more sanctions-approach is an opportunity by which principals and their supervisor/evaluator work collaboratively to share accountability in creating meaningful and productive systems change; thus, reducing, over time, the notion that evaluation is a means of weeding out ineffective leadership.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

Principals and staff have a moral and ethical obligation to their students to “provide educational development to the limits of their capacities” (Ill. Const. art. X, § 1). Formal school site visitations intend to observe principals’ professional performance practices. This structure and process of the IPEP by which evidence is collected have moral and ethical implications; as summative ratings are assigned to principals. The Illinois Standards for Principal Evaluation align with the Educational Leadership Policy Standards (23 Illinois Administrative Code 50). These standards are intended to guide the

process used in evaluating the performance practice of principals. They provide an ethical process that identifies objective criteria for measuring professional performance practice. There is a need, however, to reconsider the current structure and method of the IPEP in the implementation of those standards. According to the IPEP process, only the principal evaluator provides feedback from the formal school site visit observations. This structure has the potential to be viewed as biased; considering the generally perceived notion by principals regarding their evaluator being in a position to make subjective judgments in assessing their performance.

Implementation of the proposed policy advocacy to utilize school site visits as a means of creating conditions for a more collaborative partner relationship between the supervisor/evaluator and the principal will help reduce the perceived view by principals regarding their evaluator being in a position to make subjective judgments in assessing their performance. Implementation also helps to eradicate the perceived positional view that the principal is a subordinate in the relationship between principal supervisor (evaluator) and help foster the trust between principal and supervisor/evaluator (Bloom et al., 2005; Donaldson, 2008; Drago-Severson, 2009; Guskey, 2000; Keagan & Lahey, 2009; Murnane & Willett, 2010). This may result in minimizing the potential challenge principal supervisors/evaluators may have in being objective in assigning performance evaluation ratings to principals; supporting a stronger ethical approach to the IPEP's structure and process. Adoption and successful implementation of proposed policy recommendation to strongly suggest regular ongoing school site visitations with opportunities for reflective practice and collaboration helps ensure principals and their

staff have more opportunities for *meaningful* and *productive system change* that forge pathways to postsecondary student success.

Taking an objective, unbiased approach to determining principal's performance ratings by principal supervisors/evaluators, and strongly suggesting regular ongoing informal school site visitations has the potential to increase the value given to school site visits; primarily as a means of developing principals' ability to facilitate meaningful and productive systems change effectively. The proposed and recommended collaborative partner-relationship approach between the principal supervisor/evaluator and principal serves as the lens through which principals' professional performance practice is examined. This is significantly impactful since principal leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors as an influence on student learning (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). It is generally recognized and accepted that to raise student performance, schools need principals who have competencies to develop an environment where all students can learn (Gill, 2012). This environment is realized through meaningful and productive systems change.

A collaborative partnership between principal supervisor/evaluator and principals supports the development and growth of principals' ability to facilitate effective meaningful and productive systems change as a means of improving instruction and student achievement. This collaborative partnership results in successful and sustainable school culture and learning environment where all students can learn. The foundation for these successful highly effective and high achieving schools/districts is an ethical and moral code that includes, among others, ensuring of adequate and equitable allocation of

resources to principals and their schools; thus, helping to build mutually respectful and trusting relationships between principal supervisor/evaluator and principal.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

Goals and Objectives

According to Illinois Constitution Article X, paragraph 1, all students have the right to a quality public education that ensures their academic growth to the limits of their abilities. Included in the goals of this policy statement is the ultimate goal of *improved instruction* and *student growth*. *Student growth* is defined as a demonstrable change in a student's or group of students' knowledge or skills, as evidenced by gain and attainment on two or more assessments, between two or more points in time. This policy provides a systems approach, using research-based adult practices to achieve this by making a significant impact on instruction and learning through the creation of meaningful and productive systems change.

The goal, therefore, of the recommended extension of language change to 23 Illinois Administrative Code 50, subsections (c) (1) (C) and (c) (2), is to create conditions for a collaborative partner relationship between principal supervisor/evaluator and principals. This is achieved using the Illinois IPEP process component for school site visitations. As mentioned several times previously in this document, researchers Keagan and Lahey (2009) and others (Donaldson, 2008; Guskey, 2000; Murnane & Willett, 2010), validate the benefits leading to improved student performance scores and school experiences for all involved in such a collaborative partner relationship experience.

The primary objective of this policy is to develop a reliable and effective district-wide process for evaluating principals that improve the effectiveness of both principals and supervisors in the evaluation process. By adapting to this context, the district is meeting the specific needs of its principals. The school district, thus, is afforded the

opportunity to establish consistent and effective principal practice instructions and resources that impact instruction and student learning throughout.

The 23 Illinois Administrative Code 50 policy guidelines for the IPEP process do not address this in clear and specific and explicit language. Recommended improved guidelines include holding both principal supervisor/evaluator and principals accountable for performance standards that contribute significantly to principals' effectiveness as capacity builders, and are outcome-based and specific enough to guide the principal evaluation process. Another objective of the proposed extension of language in the policy is to serve as a means of support and provide opportunities for principal and principal supervisor/evaluator reflection and growth. Once becoming a reality, this collaborative partnership approach to school site visit observations will allow for more sanctions-oriented methods of examining professional practices that are more meaningful to principals.

Of equal significance, is the objective to serve as a means of providing opportunities for job-embedded professional development for both the principal and the supervisor. From a six-year research study funded by The Wallace Foundation (Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011) job-embedded principal PD emerged as a primary vehicle for authentic and sustainable school improvement. In that study, utilizing such an approach to develop and support the context and processes leading to principal capacity building was noted as a valid action.

Still another objective related to the goal of creating collaborative partner relationships between supervisors and principals is to provide individualized support to principals by training them in executing quality instruction and culture. This is achieved

through a continuous mentor-coach-like relationship in which supervisors build and use tools to monitor progress (Riley, 2017).

In examining moral and ethical analysis of proposed policy, it was apparent that the current structure of school site visitations under the IPEP process has the potential to be viewed as biased; considering the generally perceived notion by principals regarding their evaluator being in a position to make subjective judgments in assessing their performance. Accordingly, another related objective is to reduce principals' perceived view regarding their supervisor/evaluator being in a position to make subjective judgments in assessing their performance. This objective ultimately has the potential to eliminate any perceived positional view of a principal as a subordinate; and helps to foster trust and mutual respect (Bloom et al., 2005; Donaldson, 2008; Drago-Severson, 2009; Guskey, 2000; Keagan & Lahey, 2009; Murnane & Willett, 2010).

The proposed extension of language in the policy guidelines regarding school site visitations is an opportunity to address the issue of bias in the evaluation of principals; thus, minimizing any subjective judgments of supervisors/evaluators that may play a role in their assessing performance practice. The benefit of a collaborative partner relationship in this effort is that observed evidence related to potential recommendations for improvement can be reflected on in the real-time of school site visitations. This reflective opportunity may result in the school site visitation process yielding a more positive and welcoming experience for principals and their supervisor/evaluator.

Unfortunately for me, of the over twenty years I served as principal in several school districts, it was only in one of those districts that I experienced a collaborative partner mentor-coach relationship. The impact of its ability to influence meaningful and

productive systems change was evident in the fact that the state of Michigan removed the school of experience from a list of only seven unaccredited schools in the state.

Utilizing school site visitations in the IPEP process as proposed through this policy advocacy has the potential of ensuring every principal in every school district everywhere has opportunities to realize its benefits on a continuous and ongoing basis; even outside of the IPEP process. Use of a collaborative partner relationship between principal supervisor/evaluator and principals in the IPEP process regarding school site visitations is an opportunity for all principals in every school district to experience.

Stakeholders' Needs, Values, and Preferences

This proposed policy advocacy represents the needs, values, and preferences of students, parents, teachers and the school district at-large. Each group has a vested interest in improved instruction and increased student achievement—the ultimate goal of proposed policy advocacy. Once implemented with fidelity, the proposed extension of language to policy advocacy has the potential of ensuring specific support and job-embedded professional development for principals that is often not realized through the principal evaluation process in most districts.

The literature review for my change plan initiative (Riley, 2017) revealed indications that the support and development provided to principals make a notable and impressive difference in the overall academic achievement of the schools they lead. One study (Honig, 2012), in examining work practices of executive-level central office staff utilized in providing instructional leadership support to principals, identified specific practices such as a focus on joint work, modeling, developing and using tools, intentional design and use of materials, brokering, and creating and sustaining social engagement

with helping principals learn to strengthen their instructional leadership capacity. These benefits are outgrowths of the proposed structure and process change utilized regarding school site visitations.

These are benefits not only to principals but also their supervisor/evaluator and staff. Principals learn to engage in new ways of thinking and acting consistently with effective research-based proven practices. They learn to use tools to negotiate discussions about what should or should not be done in achieving a goal task. The supervisor/evaluator, operating as a broker, learn to contribute new ideas, understandings, and other resources that might advance the learning capacity of principals.

Another investigative study from the literature review in the change plan (Riley, 2017) assessed the effects of leadership *coaching* on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of urban public school administrators in P-12 underperforming schools. The study determined that after *coaching*, nine of 21 identified leadership responsibilities of principals showed significant growth and increased capacity; resulting in positive student achievement gains. Principals and their coaches, in this case, supervisors/evaluators, noted high levels of change in knowledge, skills, and dispositions as a result of the *coaching* experience. For example, the principal uses the nine responsibilities to enlist the leadership of others (i.e., school leadership team). The school leadership team, in turn, enacts all 21 responsibilities and brings transformational changes in the school/district. The principal supervisor/evaluator grows his/her skills in moving between facilitative and instructional approaches in practice; thus, making a meaningful difference in schools and the district. Moving between facilitative and instructional approaches is a proven characteristic of effective coaching in the Blended Coaching Model approach (Riley,

2017). The benefit of establishing a trusting and mutually respectful relationship has the advantage to increase the value of school site visitations as viewed by principals and also to reduce the perceptions of subjectivity in performance evaluation.

Wiggins' (2012) work suggests that feedback must be consistent to be useful. It further indicates that performers, in this case, principals, can only adjust their professional performance practice successfully if the feedback is stable, accurate, and trustworthy. Collaborating in discovering feedback helps put principals and their supervisor/evaluator on the same page about what productive principal practice is; becoming more consistent over time and formalizing their judgments using more useful exemplars and highly descriptive rubrics supported by anchor professional performance practices. When principals get to the point where they can comfortably distinguish between effective and ineffective practice, they become more transparent in making self-assessments. These reflective behaviors help build their capacity to influence instruction and increase student learning and achievement.

The ultimate goal of the IPEP process in the principal performance evaluation system is to contribute to the development of staff and improved student achievement outcomes. The literature review for my program evaluation (Riley, 2016) emphasized the significant impact that performance *practice* has on instruction and learning. It indicated that school leadership is second only to teaching, among school-related factors as an influence on student learning. The literature review generally recognizes and accepts that to raise student performance schools need principals who have competencies to develop an environment where all students can learn.

The principal evaluation process requires an assessment of both the principal's performance *practice* and *students' growth* (P.A. 96-861). The framework for evaluation of performance *practice* utilizes the Illinois Standards for Principals in determining the ratings for each standard. The evaluation also comprises data and indicators of student growth based on academic assessments. Tracking performance and student growth is a way to monitor performance practice and evaluate its effectiveness.

A significant measure of determining a school/district's worth is student performance and growth. The demands of our accountability system and the community-at-large, unfortunately, hold principals partially responsible for schools' level of performance and student growth. The media publishes school rankings that often results in public scrutiny and judgment. This information can be retrieved from IllinoisReportCard.com; the state's official source for information about its public schools. On the site, the first reported and strongly implied most significant data is academic performance. Even though the information is intended to help parents and other stakeholders act as informed partners in the education of their children, the school data, including academic performance, school environment, educators, students, and highlights provided by principals, usually is used to determine a school/district's worth. The proposed and recommended language extension policy change has positive implications for school/district's success; resulting in overall benefits to students, parents, teachers and the school district at-large.

The potential resulting meaningful and productive systems change is a strong argument for acceptance and implementation of the proposed recommended extension of language to policy advocacy, regarding school site visits and the IPEP process.

Successful implementation ensures the provision of quality education for all students. It helps fulfill students' constitutional right to the opportunity to be educated to the limits of their capacities (Ill. Const. art. X, § 1). Benefits include positive educational outcomes for the community as well.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

As would be expected with any policy advocacy, there are pros and cons in support of and barriers or unintended consequences respectively to this advocated extension of language to current policy. Transparent discussion of the pros and consideration of potential barriers or unintended consequences merits inclusion in this document. Discussion has the potential of further clarifying stakeholders' needs, values, and preferences outlined in the previous section.

Pros

The literature review of my change plan initiative (Riley, 2017) indicated that when principals participate in activities they view as crucial to the social or cultural contexts of their job responsibilities, they sustain their engagement in them in ways essential to their growth and development. The implications of the benefit of establishing a trusting and mutually respectful relationship through regular ongoing school site visitations process, resulting in its perceived increased value, are highly significant. First of all, it is a strategy that leads to improved instruction and learning. Secondly, according to the work of Odden and Picus (2014) regarding the new evidence-based funding model and adequacy targets, the use of collaboration, especially in the form of coaching, is considered a high leverage strategy. The principal supervisor and principal develop their coaching skills. The principal uses his/her skills to enlist the leadership of others (school leadership team), who in turn enacts these skills and brings transformational changes in the school/district. Use of this high leverage strategy is especially significant for a school/district identified as having a low percent of adequacy; thus, needing greater state assistance in meeting its adequacy target (Odden, 2012).

Another argument for this extension of language to policy advocacy is that high leverage strategy (Odden & Picus, 2014) ensures adherence to a code of ethics that guarantees ethical conduct toward students, toward principal and staff practices and performance, toward professional colleagues, and parents and community. Adherence is strengthened further through efforts of collaboration between principals with staff and community, on a regular ongoing basis, working to build and sustain a culture of high expectations and aspirations for every student. Adherence to a code of ethics results in a social-emotional learning component to the curriculum of quality education for all students as well.

Cons

There are always potential barriers to or unintended consequences that may result from implementation of proposed policy advocacy. One unintended consequence and perhaps the single most argument against the policy advocacy is the assumption that merely adopting said policy is going to guarantee implementation with fidelity. Justification of this argument is founded on two apprehensions. The first regards the supervisory obligations and performance of multiple roles in juggling competing demands for their time. The other is the operations and the management aspect of principals' non-instructional tasks. Both of these apprehensions are believed to have the potential of compromising the permanency of the new structure and process.

The first step in response to this potential barrier is buy-in at the school board and district executive levels (e.g., superintendent and executive cabinet). The school board and superintendent must ensure a process that establishes guidelines for implementation, and for orienting principals and supervisors/evaluators to how the school district will

implement the evaluation *process*. The orientation would focus on what purposes, criteria, and steps are in the evaluation process. As a result of this orientation, the principal and supervisor/evaluator would have a clear understanding of the various new aspects of the process and be more inclined to contribute to its implementation with fidelity.

The literature review from my change plan initiative (Riley, 2017) emphasized the importance of districts creating opportunities and support that will provide time and resources to relieve principals from other responsibilities so that they can benefit from collaboration with their supervisors. Pressed by these competing responsibilities and demands, districts must devise systems that enable principal supervisors/evaluators to help develop and grow principals' ability to influence instruction and learning. The benefits and potential of the proposed policy advocacy to build meaningful and productive systems change outweigh any potential barriers and unintended consequences that may result from its implementation.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In the previous policy argument section, I discussed the implications of potential barriers and unintended consequences of implementing this proposed extension of language advocacy plan. Specifically, I addressed the unintended consequence of doubts resulting in the policy implementation plan not being implemented with fidelity for the above-stated reason. In my change plan initiative document (Riley, 2017) it was revealed that high-achieving districts do more than revise their organizational charts to show a shift in responsibility on paper but change their day-to-day work to provide support for principals' development as instructional leaders. To be successfully realized, the intended change as a result of the proposed policy requires a carefully thought out and executed plan of implementation. Odden's work (2012) emphasized the importance of an implementation plan to include a structure and process of educational needs, staff development, time schedules, program budgets, and monitoring.

Needed Educational Activities

The recommended proposed policy change of extended language to the IPEP process regarding school site visitations serves to provide more explicit guidelines for the process; making it stronger and purposely aligned and adapted to the needs of principals and their supervisor/evaluator. The objective of the implementation plan is to effectively monitor and track the progress of growth and development and also ensure the effectiveness of the new and improved school site visitation process to support and develop principals as capacity builders who facilitate meaningful and productive systems change.

There are, of course, operational implications for implementation at the local district level. The IPEP process, fortunately, as established by PA 96-0861, includes a description of basic guidelines for implementation that allows for adaptation to the context and particular needs of principals and their supervisor/evaluator. Under the guidelines established under PA 96-0861 members of a required Principal Evaluation Steering Committee (PESC), which must include balanced principal and teacher representation, are responsible for overseeing the implementation plan and resolving any concerns or problems that might result when they implement the policy plan.

In adapting to the context and particular needs of not only principals and their supervisor/evaluator but also the district, the PESC must consider educational needs regarding two key areas: (1) buy-in to the recommended proposed policy advocacy and (2) the competency level of principals and principal supervisor/evaluator to engage in collaborative practice. Buy-in includes a level of readiness at the school board level, from the superintendent and other executive-level district administrators and, of course, principals and evaluator. The school board, superintendent and executive-level district administrators must be willing and ready to not only enforce the guidelines but also to perform in new ways necessary for effective implementation. Each of the stakeholders must have the knowledge and expertise to execute an effective implementation plan. Principals and their supervisor must understand how to engage in collaboration activities using research-based and proven protocols in providing feedback from school site visitations, and in using tools to monitor and evaluate the impact of performance practices on student learning. Principals and their supervisor will require training and professional development. All stakeholders, including PESC members, will require

orientation on how the school district will implement the evaluation process. As teachers are also critical partners in the school site visitations, they, therefore, should be oriented to the extended evaluation process as well. The primary objective of this orientation would be to make sure each critical partner involved in school site visitations would have a clear understanding of the various aspects of the *extended* process regarding school site visitations.

There are also implications of governance at the state level in implementing recommended proposed policy advocacy that bears consideration. Chief and foremost is the consideration for the development of a policy governance document. It is vital that statewide stakeholders know the purpose of evaluating school leaders and ways to support their professional learning and development. At the state level, all stakeholders will become more informed in making policy decisions. Stakeholders will receive state-generated information and knowledge about underlying research that support mentor-coach relationships, collaboration and feedback for competency and capacity development. Also, stakeholders will learn the potential benefits that may be realized by successful implementation of the proposed policy advocacy.

Furthermore, at the state level, similar to the description above, regarding district buy-in, consideration needs to be given to evaluation by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBOE) on the readiness of school districts to embrace recommended proposed policy advocacy in each school district throughout the state. The ISBOE would need to consider developing a plan that includes assessment of statewide districts' educational needs and professional development necessary for successful statewide

implementation of recommended proposed policy language extension. The resulting product would be a set of tools for statewide use in districts.

At both the local and state levels, costs associated with providing training and professional development and orientation needs to be considered. One option is Title IIA grant dollars. The newly Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), makes available to districts funding for professional development of principals and other school leaders (i.e., evaluators). Title II, Part A is a resource for supplemental funding of professional development for the implementation of recommended proposed language extension to current policy. The mission of Title II, Part A (Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-quality teachers, *principals*, and other *school leaders*) is “to increase the academic achievement of all students by assisting schools and school districts to prepare, train, and recruit high-quality teachers, principals, and other school leaders” (Illinois State Board of Education). Given the research on the benefits of mentor-coach relationships, timely and consistent feedback, in building competency and capacity to influence instruction and learning (Riley, 2017), consideration of funding options is essential.

Professional Development Plan

As the teaching profession is changing so, too, is the role of principals and those who supervise and evaluate them. Professional development related to this recommended proposed policy language extension advocacy is intended to address the shifts in the role of the principal and supervisor/evaluator so that they can focus on the activities that have the most impact on student learning. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) stressed the importance of educational leaders to grow to be better able to help others and themselves

to meet, manage, and thrive in our current varied and increasingly adaptive context of serving students and adults as well. Addressing and highlighting this critical educational need has the potential of making necessary changes in performance practice. Any staff development plan, thus, will require adaptation to the context and particular needs of not only principals and their supervisor/evaluator but also the district.

The work of Drago-Severson et al. (2013) on reflective practice and Costa and Garmston (2002) on *cognitive coaching* can serve as a source for establishing guidelines for needed professional development. According to Costa and Garmston, cognitive coaching supports individuals and workplace cultures that value reflection, complex thinking, and transformational learning. They developed the process as a way for principals to encourage teachers' thinking and self-directedness. The process works equally well as principal supervisors use it to support principals' thinking and self-directedness.

In the timeliest manner--recommended and proposed to occur on the day of the observation at the school site, the principal supervisor/evaluator and the principal works alongside each other in a partner relationship in the form of mentor-coach; taking joint ownership and responsibility for the results. The principal will be asked to share his/her feedback in the context of the school site visitation. Principals, like teachers, need to learn continuously to lead effectively, support, and hold teachers accountable for implementation of standards, curriculum reforms, and other instructional improvement initiatives in their schools, as well as be responsible to leadership standards themselves (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

The supervisor/evaluator will share feedback as well. Through *reflective practice*, the supervisor/evaluator and the principal engage in dialogue about observed practices (Drago-Severson et al., 2013) and the effect on instruction and learning. Research studies presented in my change plan initiative document (Riley, 2017) emphasized the importance of not only the supervisor/evaluator providing formative feedback based on observation but also encouraging the principals to reflect on their job performance related to leadership standards; and to identify and understand appropriate measures of student growth.

To help ensure the effectiveness of principals' ability and skill set and results in this aspect of the process, principals need training in the selection and use of materials and structured protocols (analysis tool/rubric) used to negotiate discussions about what they should or should not do to achieve a goal task (Barley, 1986; Weick, 1998). Principals must design materials and tools intentionally and used them to engage in new ways of thinking and acting consistently with specific practices. These guidelines provide a professional development platform that allows the school site visitation process to be a useful positive professional learning experience for both the principal and supervisor/evaluator.

The supervisor/evaluator, too, will need ongoing training and support focused on mentoring skills and the need to align professional practice with Illinois Professional Leadership Standards and the expectations of the IPEP. This professional development would help develop his/her ability to assist principals in reflecting on particular issues and developing a range of solutions; the ability to listen and to provide non-judgmental, constructive feedback and advice; empathetic, and ability to relate to the unique and

individual challenges of principals--providing differentiated strategies; and, knowledge of current leadership best practices; among others (Reiss, 2015; Turnbull et al., 2016).

As suggested in the change plan initiative document (Riley, 2017), at times, it may be appropriate for the supervisor/evaluator and principals to attend targeted professional development together to deepen their mentoring conversations. This approach, too, helps principals and their supervisor/evaluator perceive the school site visitations aspect of the IPEP process as *meaningful* and *productive* rather than as a matter of duty or custom. They will need professional development linked to performance feedback, student achievement, and growth (Honig, Lorton, & Copland, 2009; McCombs, & Miller, 2007); and that is grounded in the use of data, open dialogue, courageous conversations, and interpersonal accountability (Fullan, 2011). They both will need to know how to choose data and indicators of student growth aligned with the specific job duties of the individual principal. By statute, the State Model Principal Evaluation is 50% data and indicators of student growth. In the principal evaluation plan, the district must identify at least two assessments or measures which can provide data that meet the definition of *student growth* defined earlier in this document. They may need professional development in making decisions about selecting appropriate assessments, how to use data and how to determine which targets will be used to judge student growth along with a specification of the weights of each outcome and goal target.

Specific attention and professional development could focus on developing a deeper understanding of Drago-Severson's (2009) Four Pillar Practices--research that informs and supports the new IPEP process. This specific professional development intends to understand how supporting adult growth, while simultaneously holding high

and rigorous expectations in schools, are positively and directly linked with improved student performance scores and student growth (Donaldson, 2008; Guskey, 2000; Keagan & Lahey, 2009; Murnane & Willett, 2010). Additionally, this professional development will enable principals to conduct evidence-based reflections on their performance practices and then be able to identify priority improvement needs. Professional development in adult learning practices is essential to ensuring *meaningful* and *productive systems change* that forge pathways to postsecondary student success.

Professional development for both principals and their supervisor/evaluator should be ongoing and collaborative. Provision of ongoing, continuous job-embedded professional development for principals and their supervisor/evaluator will help convey the message that the school site visitation process is crucial in not only evaluating principals but as a means of building their capacity to create conditions for meaningful and productive systems change. It is incumbent upon school districts to carefully plan professional development intentionally based on the particular needs of the principal, the supervisor/evaluator, and the school district as well.

Time Schedules

For the school site visitation process as presented in the platform above to be implemented, a systematic approach to its timeline and schedules is necessary at both the state and district levels. The state, of course, would be responsible for developing documents to guide the implementation process. The state could use the same approach it uses to establish guidelines related to other initiatives. This includes a structure consisting of training modules that address the professional development as outlined in the previous section. Training modules include how to select and use materials and

structured protocols focused on mentoring skills. They also include how to choose data and indicators of student growth linked to performance feedback, student achievement and growth. Other module training areas include how to make decisions about selecting appropriate assessments and how to use data. Still, modules showing how to choose targets and determine weights are also included. Including a module that focuses on how to develop a deeper understanding of adult learning practices is crucial. Once the state has created training modules and produced an implementation guide resource document, districts can begin the process of implementation at the local level.

At the top of the list at the district level is, of course, an orientation schedule for all stakeholders (e.g., principals, supervisor/evaluator, teachers, etc.) on how the district will implement the *extended* evaluation process regarding school site visitations. The orientation could be scheduled for the first staff opening day activities of the school year. The initial orientation will help convey the message early-on that school site visitations are essential and relevant to the success of school improvement.

Once the orientation to apprise these stakeholders of the school leaders' evaluation process and on how the district will implement the plan, the district will plan professional development sessions. Most school districts have a professional development committee and in-district process. The district would be responsible for following established guidelines and procedures. The state-required Principal Evaluation Steering Committee (PESC), of course, would play a significant part in monitoring this process.

The unique aspect of required professional development for the two major stakeholders is the fact that a significant amount of PD is job-embedded and on-going

throughout the school year. The use of protocols and the logistics of conducting school site visitations, for example, can be addressed at an informal meeting with principals and their supervisor/evaluator. My change plan initiative document (Riley, 2017) outlined a guiding list of topics/PD that could occur at a goal-setting meeting between the principal and his/her supervisor/evaluator. The literature review from my program evaluation (Riley, 20116), emphasized the need for ongoing, job-embedded professional development for principals.

Program Budgets

The district must commit first to changes in the role of human resources to avoid any significant change in the district's overall budget. For this kind of professional development and systemic change to occur, the central office needs to re-establish its priorities and redefine new descriptions of the functions of principals as instructional leaders and those who supervise them. The school also needs to allocate time for *collaboration* between the principals and their supervisor. Districts usually maintain budget line items that provide for outside consultants, attendance at workshops, seminars and conferences for training which would be needed for professional development.

While the extended IPEP process regarding school site visitations has budget implications at the district level concerning professional and policy development, the vast majority of professional development program budgets, fortunately, are directed to principals and their supervisor/evaluator. I outlined the training component in the professional development section above. It requires appropriate training and support for successful implementation and effective influence on instruction and learning. Depending on the number of principals and principal supervisors/evaluators, the district

can anticipate related personnel costs minimal to moderate, and not have a significant impact on the overall budget.

As the majority of training components of the implementation plan focuses on collaboration, and use of collaboration in providing feedback, especially in the form of coaching, is considered a high leverage strategy (Odden, 2012), funding support under the new evidence-based funding model in the state of Illinois may provide relief to eligible districts. This new model includes *adequacy targets* that support the success of its systems. An adequacy target is the sum of all education cost factors. A district's adequate target level determines the amount of state funding assistance. The closer to its adequacy target results in less state funding. The farthest away from its adequacy target results in more state funding. These targets are a product of the work of Odden and Picus (2014) on policy as it relates to school finance. The model identified high leverage strategies for schools on improving student learning when budgets are tight. Additional funding relief to districts are grant dollars under the newly Title II, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mentioned above in the Needed Educational Activities section of this document.

As an example of specific materials cost for a budget, a district may consider purchasing the three books recommended for book studies in my change plan initiative (Riley, 2017): 1) *Leverage Leadership*, by Bambrick-Santoyo and Peiser (2012); 2) *Coaching: Approaches and Perspectives* (Knight, 2009); and 3) *Blended Coaching*, by Bloom et al. (2005). The cost of purchasing one copy of each book for each stakeholder to be involved in the book club, obviously, depends on the size of the district's pool of principals and supervisors/evaluators. Purchase of these books is to be a onetime

purchase, besides the normal wear and tear, to last for the duration of service by principals and principal supervisors/evaluators to the district. As new principal and supervisor/evaluator personnel are added, the district would need to make additional purchases. As mentioned previously, the district can anticipate the cost will be minimal to moderate, and not have a significant impact on the district line item for materials and supplies purchases. The district should follow established training protocol for newly assigned principals or principal supervisors/evaluators as appropriate.

Progress Monitoring Activities

As previously mentioned in this document, the PESC has the responsibility to oversee the implementation of this policy process and resolve any concerns or problems that might result when they implement the process. To be effective, monitoring will have to be done with PESC members along with principals and their supervisor/evaluator. Monitoring must take on a resemblance of *reflective practice* and *collaborative (collegial) inquiry* in the form of a reciprocal exchange of ideas and expertise between them. Also, there must be a balance of direction and capacity to make *informed* decisions (Dragon-Severson et al., 2013). The effectiveness of these stakeholders to monitor will determine the sustainability of the *extended IPEP* process regarding school site visitations.

During this ongoing process, principals have the responsibility to conduct evidence-based reflections on their performance practice and then can identify priority modification and improvement needs. Professional development and principals' and supervisor/evaluator's feedback must link to performance practice, student achievement, and growth (Honig et al., 2009; McCombs & Miller, 2007). Professional develop and

feedback must be grounded in the use of data, open dialogue, courageous conversations, and interpersonal accountability (Fullan, 2011). The PESC has the responsibility to ensure various types and optional activities for principals to engage in purposeful activities and exercises designed to increase their cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities.

These activities may come in the form of release days during the academic school year with additional time weekly for principals and their supervisor/evaluator to reflect on their practice and engage in collegial inquiry. Monthly conversations between experienced principals and less experienced principals will support their learning and development. Leadership retreats will provide opportunities to learn from individual leadership problems, to process experiences and leadership dilemmas together; and to share ideas for improving schools and instructional leadership practices. Engaging in these types of purposeful activities and exercises will help build a culture of *meaningful* and *productive practices*.

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

Evaluation of Outcomes and Results

School site visitations play a significant part in the IPEP process. It will be necessary for the central office to gather evidence-based data on its efficacy for improving performance practice. This will also help to measure the efficacy of the implication of the proposed extended language to the IPEP process. Suggested areas for assessing the success of the policy implementation are 1) assessment of professional growth for principals, and 2) collective principal and principal supervisor/evaluator satisfaction.

One tool for gathering evidence-based data is a survey questionnaire for both principals and principal supervisor/evaluator. Per the IPEP process guidelines, evaluators must choose data and indicators of *student growth* tied to the specific job duties of the principal. Utilizing these two data points can provide indicators of the level of success in creating meaningful and productive systems change over time. The IPEP also places a strong emphasis on self-assessment. The guidelines indicate that before performance practice can be improved, principals need to recognize where improvement is needed. As they identify their priority improvement needs, the degree to which the recommended proposed extended language to the IPEP process enables principals to conduct evidence-based reflections on their performance can be determined. The IPEP process guidelines further suggest the principal's job description as well as the Illinois Performance Standards and Rubric for School Leaders (IPSRSL), as additional resources for reflection. This evidence evidence-based data will help determine the impact of the extended proposed policy advocacy on influencing principals' ability to create

meaningful and productive systems change. Documentation of evidence-based data for specifically selected indicators as identified in the IPSRSL can also assess the impact of the extended policy advocacy on principals' professional growth.

One noted distinction that will be useful in analyzing strengths and weaknesses of my recommended proposed extension of language to current policy is that between the needed *intentional educational* activities (mentioned five sections above) that are ongoing and those that are finite. The two key characteristics of analyzing the policy's continuous, intentional educational learning activities will be to design activities as a series of meetings that build on one another and that activities involve a small number of participants (e.g., principals and supervisor/evaluator). As an example, the supervisor/evaluator will work on an ongoing basis with district principals individually and as a group to support them in recognizing high-quality instruction when they make classroom observations. Because of the small number of principals and supervisor/evaluator is involved, the group might evolve into a genuine community of practice that works together for the explicit purpose of improving performance practice.

For clarification, according to Cobb, McClain, Lamberg, and Dean (2003) and Wenger (1998), indicators that the group of principals and principal supervisor/evaluator has become a community of practice may include execution of a joint mission, an established set of norms, or a shared vision. By definition found in educational policy and leadership literature (Grossman, Weinberg, & Woolworth, 2001), the fact that the principal supervisor/evaluator and principals will meet on a regular basis qualifies them to be called a community of practice. Assessment of whether they would have evolved

into a genuine community of practice is one to address through observation and experiment; rather than theoretically.

A point that bears noting is that although communities of practice can be productive contexts for professional learning, the emergence of a community of practice does not guarantee the occurrence of learning opportunities that further policy goals (Cobb et al., 2003) and Wenger (1998). Marks and Louis (1997), regarding the development of educational leadership, indicated the importance of interactions among community members (i.e., principals) that focus consistently on issues central to practice, and that go beneath surface aspects of performance practice to address core suppositions, assumptions, and principles (Coburn & Russell, 2008). This suggests the value of one or more members of the community (i.e., principal supervisor/evaluator) having already developed relatively accomplished practices (i.e., coaching & collaboration, etc.). Having done so, he/she can push interactions to greater depth (Coburn & Russell, 2008). Accordingly, he/she can provide concrete illustrations that offer a reason or basis for giving and receiving more suitable or more satisfactory exchanges (Penuel, Frank, & Krause, 2006).

The critical role of principal supervisors/evaluators as experts in a community of practice whose mission is to support principals' learning and development is consistent with the importance attributed to "more knowledgeable others (MKO)" in sociocultural accounts of knowledge (Bruner, 1987; Cole, 1996; Forman, 2003). The MKO is somewhat self-explanatory. It refers to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, concerning a particular task, process, or concept.

The concept of MKO is also the basis of the mentor-coach approach to professional development.

The critical aspects of the above highlighted ongoing intentional educational learning activities are consistent with the qualities of effective teacher professional development identified in research (Borko, 2004; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). These qualities, which apply to principals as well, include extended duration, collective participation, active learning opportunities, a focus on problems and issues that are close to practice, and attention to the use of tools that are integral to practice. The suggested needed educational activities recommended in this document are believed to have these qualities; and therefore, support principals' resulting performance practice growth and development.

Contrary to intentional educational learning activities are finite educational learning activities. These include professional development that happens only once and not ongoing; as well as a series of meetings that are not designed to build on each other. If in monthly meetings, for example, principals engage in activities that focus on instructional leadership only occasionally, and these activities do not build on each other, the monthly meetings would classify as finite rather than ongoing and intentional educational learning activities.

Finite educational learning activities can be valuable in supporting the development of specific capacities or capabilities that address or extend existing practices (e.g., introducing a classroom observation tool that fits with principals' existing performance practices and is designed to make their observations more systematic) or a onetime event (e.g., orientation to the recommended proposed policy extension of

language advocacy). By themselves, however, finite educational learning activities are unlikely to be sufficient in supporting performance practice utilizing recommended proposed policy extension of language advocacy.

It will be essential in evaluating outcomes and results of policy implementation to document and assess educational learning activities that are both intentional and evidence-based. To do so will help determine whether the policy is achieving the desired results. Depending on the assessment outcomes and results, it may be necessary to make adjustments to the policy or the implementation of the policy.

Another aspect of evaluating outcomes and results is the value of the use of tools and materials in educational learning activities. Although instruments play a central role in most school and district instructional improvement efforts, these units do not use them as an explicit focus of analysis in the policy and leadership literature (Coburn & Stein, 2010). To me, it appears significantly important in evaluating outcomes and results to take account of the effectiveness of tools and materials used in the educational learning activities. Consideration of assessing the value of tools and materials used in the recommended proposed policy advocacy to impact principals' performance practice may prove to be meaningful and useful, and help strengthen the evidence-based data needed that is valid and reliable. In the same manner that professional development needs to be ongoing and job-embedded (Riley, 2016), the evaluation of outcomes and results of recommended proposed extension of language to current policy needs to be ongoing as well (Haddad, 1995).

SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

Through this policy advocacy document, I am advocating a language extension to the guidelines of the 23 Illinois Administrative Code 50, subsections (c) (1) (C) and (c) (2), regarding the school site visitations process of the IPEP. The purpose of this policy is to provide more explicit guidelines that will not only assist in effectively monitoring and tracking the progress of growth and development but also ensure the effectiveness of district efforts to intentionally create ways to support and develop principals as capacity builders who facilitate meaningful and productive systems change. Instead of using evaluation rating as a means of weeding out ineffective leadership, the policy ignites the potential principals, and their supervisor/evaluator can bring to the table individually and collectively through *collaboration*; and provides a hopeful alternative to a more sanctions-oriented approach to leadership and school improvement (Drago-Severson et al., 2013).

The feedback that is goal-referenced, specific and personalized, timely and ongoing is believed to be helpful and practical (Wiggins, 2012). The program evaluation (Riley, 2016) emphasized the importance of principals and other building leaders engaging in ongoing supervision, assessment, coaching and continuous career-long professional development; to be able to demonstrate required expectations of “new” principal standards (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kelley & Peterson, 2002). The combination of these two factors is believed to impact performance practice positively; ultimately influencing instruction and student achievement and learning.

The provision for *immediate joint feedback* by both principal and supervisor/evaluator on the day of school site visitations provides a means for obtaining the highest

level of useful feedback in the timeliest manner. Incorporating the extended language additions to 23 Illinois Administrative Code 50, subsections (c) (1) (C) and (c) (2) (p. 35) create the opportunity for this to occur. Realizing that any unforeseen emergency, however, could prevent immediate joint feedback from happening right after the school site visitation has occurred the term *mandated* is purposefully omitted from the recommended policy extended language with caution.

The impact of providing feedback in the timeliest manner--recommended and proposed to occur on the day of the school site visit observation is in response to the specific policy problem that restricts principals from getting more timely feedback and opportunities to use it while the attempt and effects are still fresh in their minds. As pointed out in this policy document, researchers (Bransford et al., 2000; Hattie, 2008; Marzano et al., 2001) generally agree that in most cases, it is best to give immediate feedback.

Providing immediate feedback has the potential of having a significant effect on instruction and learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). The policy ensures principals and their supervisor/evaluator engages in purposeful, intentional *collaborative* educational learning activities and exercises that result in improved instruction, increased student learning, and student growth. This change in principal and supervisor/evaluator *culture* replaces the old and common practice of evaluator-principal among principals and their supervisor/evaluator, to that of a collaborative partnership characterized by a trusting and mutually respectful relationship. The ultimate and most significant impact this extension of language to current *policy would have is to* help ensure the provision of quality education for all students to the best of their capabilities.

While engaging in *collaborative* intentional educational learning activities, using *reflective practice* and *collegial inquiry*, and the other adult pillar practices, is a supported and validated research intervention for building individual capacity, school districts must continue to seek alternative ways they can provide opportunities better to develop, improve and support principals' leadership practices and teachers' instructional practices as well. Opportunities would include finding proven ways to facilitate *meaningful* and *productive systems change*. The benefits of positive and effective impacts in the contexts of educational, economic, social, political and, moral and ethical disciplinary areas in our educational system depend on it. I emphasize the fact that the recommended proposed extension of policy language and guidelines is an *addition to* rather than a *replacement of* current policy.

Another significant long-term benefit of *immediate joint feedback* as part of the school site visitation in the IPEP process is the potential of improving the context and content of and, growing the competency levels of administrators and culture of the overall school district. Implementation of *immediate joint feedback* helps to dispel any perception of the IPEP process being a means of weeding out ineffective principals; thus, strengthening its value of importance, and resulting in a culture of collaboration throughout the district. These protocols have the potential to impact all stakeholders. They serve as a means of giving *immediate joint feedback* as a part of the school site visitation aspect of the IPEP process. Also, they help provide opportunities for ongoing, multiple informal school site visitations and observations. With planning, and extensive communication utilizing the most advanced available technology, these protocols could

improve principals' ability to create *meaningful and productive systems change* effectively throughout the state.

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